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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1554
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTJF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 001205

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON
NSC FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NEWSPAPER HOSTS AN ICC DEBATE: SAME STUFF, DIFFERENT WAY

¶1. (U) On August 6, the Khartoum-based Sudan Vision newspaper hosted an event regarding the recent actions by the International Criminal Court (ICC) entitled "Ocampo's Allegations: International Justice or Colonial Agendas." While the event seemed to promise a forum that would explore multiple perspectives on the ICC's recent actions, in the end it predictably lapsed into a one-sided denunciation of "hypocrisy by the West."

¶2. (U) On August 6, APAO and Media Assistant were welcomed into the offices of the English-language, pro-National Congress Party (NCP) newspaper Sudan Vision. In private, the Editor-in-Chief of the paper, Saif Adeen al-Bashir, appeared very pro-American, speaking at length about how much he respected American volunteerism. He also showed a great amount of enthusiasm for federalism, which he sees as "a source of many of Sudan's problems." Al-Bashir, a 2006 International Visitor Leadership Program alumnus, spoke fondly of his time spent in Nebraska, where he "experienced the concept of federalism firsthand" and "could not believe that important, educated people there had never been to Washington DC."

¶3. (U) The mood of the day changed dramatically, however, as soon as the press event began. Al-Bashir introduced Dr. Khalid Hussein as an "expert on international law" and the head of the Sudanese Council for Research. Local reporters made up most of the press event's audience. Dr. Hussein spoke for about 90 minutes on why "the ICC's actions are illegal." Using specific legal jargon, he outlined why the ICC's recent actions were "wrong," highlighting a myriad of individual clauses in the Rome Statute. The only mentions of the United States occurred when he said the U.S. was "adamant that only signatories would be under the ICC's jurisdiction," and that it was "worried that the statute would include our troops." But every argument Hussein made pointed to the same conclusion: the ICC's allegations were "politically motivated and illegal." He ended his talk by saying "Ocampo can eat his allegations and suck on them."

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: Though there was the vague promise of a "forum" presenting multiple perspectives on the recent actions by the ICC, this press event turned out to be a mouthpiece for NCP rebuttal. Predictably, the NCP and its supporters are not above perverting a debate on the issue into a one-sided condemnation against the West.

FERNANDEZ